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ABSTRACT

West Chester State College and the intermediate units of Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery ccunties joined in 1979 to develop the Pennsylvania Writing Project (PWP) as a National Writing Project site. The William Penn Foundation provided initial funding for the project, and a number of schools and school districts have also contributed funds. Each year, the PWP--following the model of the Bay Area Writing Project--brings a group of area teachers from all grade levels to the West Chester State College campus for a four-week summer institute of intensive study and interaction. It also engages the teachers in follow-up inservice programs in which they become teacher/consultants reaching other teachers. Teachers in the summer institute participate in a variety of activities, including demonstrations of teaching methods, (usually presented by participants for their peers) and small group discussions that provide the teachers with the opportunity to practice the kinds of assignments they give their students. Nationally known experts on teaching writing also make presentations. (Extensive examples of writing from participants in the 1980 summer institute and from their students concerning their responses to learning about the writing process and the project are included.) (MKM)

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THE PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT: FROM TEACHERS TO TEACHERS

Robert H. Weiss

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THE PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT: FROM TEACHERS TO TEACHERS

I think I am doing a better job than I did before. My strength is that I am getting to the point where I understand what I am writing and how to go about writing it. . . .

(Debbie Mosetter, 10th grade student, Upper Dublin High School, Upper Dublin School District)

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If someone were to tell me that I could get my classes to write willingly, I would have told them it would take a miracle. Now. . . I believe miracles still happen.

When I began this course my classes, which consist of non-readers and non-writers, refused to write. The few times I forced them to write were very frustrating to them as well as myself. . . . Once the students realized that I was not waiting with pen in hand to make corrections, they felt freer to write and express themselves. . . .

(From a position paper by Deborah Townsend, Chester High School, Chester-Upland School District)

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In short, I believe that the strongest benefits of the Pennsylvania Writing Project are the practicality of the lessons of writing styles presented, and the versatility of the lesson formats, in that they can be adapted to any level of instruction from kindergarten up to and including college level. I firmly believe that this course should be required of all college students preparing to teach English at any level of instruction.

(From a position paper by Judith Volk, Paxon Hollow Junior High School, Marple Newtown School District)

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I like Writers Workshop. I think when we publish something, I think you should give us a little more time to revise the paper we are doing.

I think every once in a while you should let us do free-writing, and then read it to the class.

(David Soyster, 7th grade student, Nether Providence Middle School, Wallingford-Swarthmore School District)

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I like Journals. I get my feelings out. I write what I feel. I think they are a great Idea! I really feel better when I write in my Journal. I like them alot. Journals help me feel better about alot of things. I think we should keep them.

(Pattie McHale, 4th grade student, Hillcrest Elementary School, Upper Darby School District)

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It [the Bay Area Writing Project model] appears to be the best large-scale effort to improve composition instruction now in operation in this country, and certainly is the best one on which substantial data are available.

(Michael Scriven, past president, American Educational Research Association)

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By now the Bay Area Writing Project and the National Writing Project network begun by it are familiar to everyone in the profession of English who takes a serious interest in the teaching of composition. All of the over 30,000 teachers who have been "BAWP-ed" either at the original site or the 79 other National Writing Project affiliates have a thorough grounding in recent theory and research in composition, a full sense of their processes as writers, and a set of proven classroom strategies for improving writing performance at all stages of the writing process. Many of these teachers have emerged from intensive Writing Project institutes with the capability to be in-service presenters in their own right. The success of the original Bay Area site's model staff development program for writing teachers has been featured in virtually every major journal devoted to teaching or to writing instruction, and it is regularly singled out for praise by popular periodicals such as Time and US News and World Report which occasionally report on (declaim, really) the current state of writing in schools and colleges.

Now in its 7th year, the parent Bay Area site still continues to attract teachers to its summer institute and subsequent in-service programs, to sponsor a series of teacher-written curriculum guides, and to advise and assist the 79 other National Writing Project sites that it helped to

create. Those more recent sites, each one independent and self-sustaining, are now achieving their own renown for improving student writing performance and attitude to writing. The New Jersey Writing Project has attained national validation as "a program that works;" the Chicago Area Writing Project has submitted data for similar validation; a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities enables the Northern Virginia Writing Project to supply all NWP sites with color videotapes of superior writing instruction; three NWP sites were featured in the most recent issue of English Education--the list of achievements is long and impressive. In the spirit of the parent site, every NWP site stands ready to assist in the development of new sites and to share resources, thereby adding more ripples to what is possibly the most significant ripple effect ever felt in the English profession.

In 1979, with the aid of the Bay Area Writing Project, the Pennsylvania Writing Project (PWP) was born. To qualify for affiliation, the PWP had to show that it was a collaborative college-schools effort, that it could raise funds locally, and that it had a strong base of knowledge and experience in the teaching of writing. Cooperating to develop the Pennsylvania Writing Project were West Chester State College and the Intermediate Units of Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties; initial funding came from the William Penn Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and local schools and school districts. The Bay Area site shared its expertise and its varied resources to enable us to achieve our stated goal of improving writing instruction in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Like all other sites of the National Writing Project, the Pennsylvania version provided for two major activities directed to this goal: (1) a summer institute for a small group of master teachers of writing, K-college, and (2) a set of in-service activities and courses available to teachers during the

school year. Initially, the planners had some difficulty in finding good teachers willing to encumber four weeks of their summer. Despite this understandable initial reluctance, twenty-one teachers from grades two to college committed themselves to the first PWP Summer Institute. None of them knew precisely what that summer had in store for them or what its aftermath would be. Nonetheless, their enthusiasm and commitment persisted, as a result of which the Project has been able to give six sustained in-service courses in three counties and to make occasional presentations to hundreds of other teachers. Evaluations of the Institute were glowing, and evaluations of the in-service activities conducted by the Institute Fellows were of the same order of brightness.

What follows is the story of the Pennsylvania Writing Project to date, as it is told by the teachers participating in both of its major activity phases and by their students. What makes it worth telling is simply the fact that it exists: that valid notions of the writing process indeed translate into successful strategies for teaching writing, and that teachers can indeed communicate these strategies successfully to other teachers.

We have chosen to present ourselves through different voices, each one testifying to a significant aspect of the Project's operations. This choice calls for some explanation.

~~What is the reason we have presented ourselves by testimony?~~

The Pennsylvania Writing Project, like other flourishing sites of the National Writing Project, is a continuous process itself. Each wave or round of the Project's year begins with a selected group of teachers and moves from them in a ripple effect to: (1) their students, (2) colleagues in their own schools and districts, (3) colleagues in other schools or districts affected by Project in-service activities, and (4) the students of the teachers mentioned in (2) and (3). The Project, then, is a largely self-sustaining and self-expanding process, unlike programmatic activities which address a limited audience for limited purposes. It is student-centered and teacher-centered. The reason

we have presented ourselves through testimony rather than data or argument is simple: since we exist to provide a service to teachers and their students, their testimony is the best evidence to describe the Project's processes and their effect on teachers and students. Our quantitative data are just eloquent; our interviews, surveys, and testimony are what evaluators call "sexy."

As I write this in February the teachers who became the Project's Fellows last Spring are assuming positions of leadership in the Project. They lead and coordinate its in-service activities, and in presentations they give throughout the Delaware Valley they disseminate its philosophy and related practices. Astoundingly, they meet--with an 85% attendance record--one Saturday a month to discuss their work, to analyze their own and their students' writing, to refine their presentations, or to hear presentations from outside experts. No other kind of writing project can claim such a record.

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What happened in the 1980 Summer Institute

A summer institute is at the heart of all National Writing Project sites. Like its predecessors at the other sites, the Institute at West Chester State College was not a typical graduate course. It balanced composition theory and practice within a daily set of varied reading, writing, talking, and listening activities pertaining to the writing process. Each participant made practical and theoretical presentations to the full group. Sessions in small response groups enabled all participants to give and receive constructive comments on each of several different kinds of writing.

Guest speakers shared current research into writing as a process and into the working of other writing projects. Susan Sowers (University of New Hampshire) discussed research on writers in the primary grades and gave powerful illustrations of how process-centered writing classes

could stimulate children to write and revise many times. Joe Strzepek (University of Virginia) focussed on teachers' images of themselves as writers and how those images affect the way they teach writing: a teacher who is reluctant to write will probably convey that reluctance to students. Don McQuade (Queens College, CUNY) stressed the importance of knowing our students' backgrounds as people and as writers; then he shifted to a discussion of the metaphor as a stimulus for composition. Keith Caldwell, from the original Bay Area Writing Project, gave a presentation on teaching the reluctant writer--a presentation which brought home to us the fact that we too would have to give effective presentations on the writing process. Dixie Goswami (University of Tennessee) raised questions concerning the political implications of literacy as a liberating and democratizing force, related those questions to our traditional goals and methods as teachers of writing, and forcefully reminded us of our unique potential as classroom researchers. Linda Waitkus (Director of the New Jersey Writing Project) gave us a sober reminder that all of our new knowledge would not bear instant fruit with our students or with our colleagues. Despite her caution, Institute participants were unanimously enthusiastic in describing their summer.

Institute activities literally inundated the participating teachers in the writing process and in current theory, research, and effective teaching practice in composition.

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Writing

Prewriting, rewriting, revising

Bombarded, engulfed, involved, exhausted

Learning

(Poem from the Summer Institute,
Freema Nichols, Nether Providence
Middle School, Wallingford/Swarthmore School District)

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Would you analyze that in writing please?

Analyze, synthesize, list, phrase,

Use a metaphor.

Write! Write! Write!

Think about it. Read about it. Write about it.

Analyze, synthesize, utilize, summarize.

I think I'm losing my sanitize.

From nine 'til five, it's write and rewrite.

From five 'til nine, it's on my mind

Book review, position paper, publishable form.

Correctness? Grammatical? emotional? personal?

Reflexive, extensive, transactional, reactional.

I think I'm losing my rational.

(Poem from the Summer Institute,
Patricia Groves, Octorara High
School, Octorara Area School District)

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The bombardment consisted largely of activities informed by the Writing Project's philosophical position that the teacher of writing must know what it is to be actively engaged in all stages of the writing process. Because these activities thrust participants into the writer's role, they led to dramatic reassessment of the writing teacher's role, and this reappraisal led to constructive consideration of classroom strategies to induce students to assume the same role of writer--and of audience.

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Can you picture a blind woman standing in the middle of a busy intersection and directing traffic? She blows her whistle and gestures randomly--stop, go, left turn, right turn, straight ahead--all without knowing where her unseen drivers are or where they are going.

Many times as a teacher of writing I have pictured myself as that blind traffic director. Where were my students coming from? What writing abilities did they have? Where should they be going? What directions could I give to help them on their way? I waved my arms madly, blew my whistle shrilly, and heaved a sigh of relief when another year ended without any major smash-ups. Whether anyone was any closer to his destination was a question I couldn't answer.

I still think of myself as a traffic director, but now I can see. I still wave my arms and blow my whistle, but now to some purpose. I know where my students are coming from or how to find out. I know the routes along which I want to guide them, and I even have some ideas as to how to make those roads smoother and more direct.

How do I view my role as a writing teacher?

I believe that I am a guide not a director. I should help the writer find many ways of expressing himself in writing, not direct or limit him to one mode.

(From a position paper by
Doris Gabel, Octorara Elementary
School, Octorara Area School District)

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My most significant observation during the Institute is the discovery that I am a writer. . . . I no longer got hives at the thought of writing. . . . It is one of the ways in which I exist. I see too that gestation of writing takes many forms, including allowing my mind to work without any control The stages--though separate in function--are not necessarily linear. Pre-writing and composing may occur alternately; we revise throughout as I've just done six times with this paragraph. . . .

I got comfortable with the messiness not just because I trusted the process and felt secure, but because I learned to see writing for the first time as a tool for myself. It jogs memory, focuses thought, forces investigation, orders understanding, catalogues learning, gives voice to feeling, and affirms humanity. Surprise of it all, it provides joy.

This is way, in order to teach others, we need to emphasize the dynamics of the process--how to work in the medium--rather than the analysis of the product.

(From a position paper by
Janet Greco, Upper Dublin
High School, Upper Dublin
School District)

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The teacher of writing is a person who does much writing himself in many modes and for many audiences. He believes that writing is a worthwhile endeavor and an asset. The teacher is aware of the many opportunities for pre-writing and has experienced the joys and frustrations of bringing personal experiences to live through his writing. He shares not only his own writing, but the struggles he experiences in the process. He shows students his lists, messy notes, and rough draft copies. . . . Likewise, he knows that ideas come from experience so the writer begins with experience.

The writing teacher knows that grades on a paper do not tell the student what to do. The teacher's role is to identify not that the student is writing poorly but why the student is writing poorly so that he can guide the student to discover ways to improve the writing. . . . One satisfactory method of grading is to allow the student to choose a selection of papers from his cumulative writings or a single best paper which he would like the teacher to use as a criterion of his work.

(From a position paper by
Sister Regina Noel Dunn,
Villa Maria Academy, Malvern)

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I plan to begin in September by reversing the common model for teaching writing, which moves from correctness to form to fluency, and instead to allow opportunities first for fluency and then move toward form and finally to correctness. There are numerous methods to use in this progression. Many will be tried, some used, some thrown away. Regardless of how successful one teacher has found a technique to be, it may not work well for another teacher's style. . . .

A sense of audience and purpose for writing make the writer "own" the writing. If the teacher is the audience, then the teacher should respond with real questions that need answers from the writer. If the audience is outside the student-teacher relationship, then the audience should be identified prior to writing, and the finished writing should be published in some form for this named audience. . . .

It has occurred to me that my position as an elementary teacher in a nearly self-contained classroom offers a marvelous opportunity for me to not only experiment in a wide variety of ways, but also to introduce these approaches to writing in all curriculum areas. Traditionally it has been difficult for an elementary teacher to have a field of expertise. The teaching of writing could be mine.

(From a position paper by Lois Snyder, Drexel Hill Elementary, Upper Darby School District)

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The importance of [the position paper] may lie in the fact that I am writing about writing, thereby selecting, evaluating, organizing data in the attempt to communicate to you my view of the writing process. I am at last practicing what I am preaching. How refreshing! Maybe now I'll have the courage to throw away "the outline," 'the paragraph," "the comma," and turn my attention to what's going on inside my students as they write. Maybe if I can tune into myself and my students as writers,

I will some day become a teacher of writing. I would like that.

I write, I teach; therefore I am.

(From a position paper by
Kathryn Head, Henderson Senior High School,
West Chester Area School District)

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"And your assignment for tomorrow is a 500 word essay analyzing The Great Gatsby. make certain you have a good introduction, a well developed body with detailed examples, quotes from the primary source and a conclusion which restates your purpose. Vary your sentence length and beginnings. Do not use personal pronouns, contractions or 'to be' verbs. You will be allowed one mechanical error per page. Any questions?"

Little wonder I continued in these practices since it wasn't until a master's degree and eight years later that I finally took my FIRST methods course in writing [the Summer Institute.]

(From a position paper by
Patricia Wachholz, Henderson Senior
High School, West Chester Area School
District)

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The use of response groups is an excellent method of peer evaluation, as well as a way of providing an audience for the writer. Students meet in small groups and share their writing. Peers offer positive responses and ask for further information as well as clarification. They may also suggest further development. A closeness and warmth may develop as the

children share consecutive writings with those in their response group. From time to time, teachers may change the membership in groups to offer a new audience for the writer.

(From a position paper by Merle Horowitz, Hillcrest Elementary, Upper Darby School District)

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The most important thing that I have learned, to my wonder, is that what I do as a writer is much like what Susan Sowers [of the University of New Hampshire's Writing Process Laboratory] has observed very young writers doing. The process of writing is not neat. It is messy. It does not proceed in nice straight lines from stage to stage but rather progresses, folds back on itself, progresses more, destructs, progresses, and so forth. The stages of prewriting, composing, revising, and editing do not take place in orderly progressions. Rather it is more like backing and filling, backing and filling until the final smoothing or grading is done. Sowers refers to the pre-writing period as a time of rehearsal, and notes that students rehearse on the way to school, while taking their evening baths, or in bed. I have discovered that I rehearse also driving to the grocery store before breakfast while waiting for the toast to pop, and while brushing my teeth. No longer do I feel guilty about putting off the actual first draft because it has been writing itself in my head for a long time. It writes, re-writes, deletes, embellishes, and re-writes itself again in silent splendor as it incubates in the warm humidity of my mind.

(From a position paper by Edith Lefferts, Swarthmore High School, Wallingford/ Swarthmore School District)

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I assumed, as others have, that writing was prescriptive. The teacher gave the formula and the student followed the formula. His degree of success was based on his ability to follow that formula. The fact that in most cases it did not work well was a reflection on the student or teacher, not on the formula.

While retaining a few cornerstones of the old theory (I believe that outlines can be useful, that grammar has its place, and structure is necessary), I am ready to concede that the process of writing may be quite different than I had presumed. It is not an orderly procedure; it is recursive, and much takes place before anything is produced on paper.

The most significant lifting of pedantic anchors is the shifting of emphasis from product to process.

(From a position paper by Patricia Groves, Octorara High School, Octorara Area School District)

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What happened after the Summer Institute

What was to happen with these teachers after the 1980 Summer Institute was an open question. Had they considered it just another graduate course, perhaps, with a new slant on classroom techniques and a few proven gimmicks? What effects would be felt by their students and their colleagues?

To begin to answer some of these questions, four Institute participants were randomly selected for in-depth interviews. While their initial reactions to giving up four weeks of the summer had ranged from "very belligerent" and "a lot of reservations," to "absolutely no reservations," all four ended

the Institute with no reservations whatsoever. In fact, all were eager to try their new ideas: "I'm very excited about what's happened. I'm really geared up for teaching!" "I'm really looking forward to trying out new things with my own class. . . maybe expecting more than I'll see in the beginning, but looking forward to it." All four had changed the image they held of themselves as teachers of writing. One saw herself "much more as a facilitator for writing to occur in the classroom, rather than the traditional type of teacher." Another who had never thought of herself "as a teacher of writing," now believed that "writing can be important in all areas of the elementary curriculum."

When the Project's Summer Fellows returned to their schools, they did three things: (1) they modified their own teaching, (2) they discussed their work with colleagues, and (3) they acted as consultants or presenters outside their own schools and districts. Each of these activities occurred as predicted in the Bay Area Writing Project model.

First, the Institute participants now applied current theory and research to their teaching of writing. As a result, their students did more self-sponsored writing; spent more time on writing, on prewriting activities, on rewriting activities, and on contemplating their written products. They did more writing in various forms, for various purposes, and to various audiences, and they seemed to take more pleasure with their writing. For most of the teachers, allocating class time to the writing process was new. Also new was the resolve to encourage the development of fluency in writing before form and correctness. Classroom publication would become a teaching strategy in the classrooms of most of the Summer Institute participants, and evaluation would be

based on completed pieces of writing, impromptu or revised, rather than standardized test scores measuring proofreading skills.

Given all of these classroom skills, one would think that the Project's Summer Fellows would be used extensively as "resource people" by their colleagues, both on the building and district levels. In many cases, such use occurred. But the Project staff had not insisted that Fellows actively proselytize; rather, it had cautioned participants against over-eagerness in "spreading the word," advising them to proceed with caution.

Perhaps as a result of that advice, other teachers showed an interest in hearing and learning more about the Pennsylvania Writing Project. Work behind the scenes by Intermediate Unit representatives was instrumental at this stage, as the following communication illustrates.

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This past summer I attended a writing institute for teachers at West Chester State College, and I must say it was one of the most exciting and stimulating programs I've observed in a long time. The teachers who were involved in this Pennsylvania Writing Project activity will surely provide the impetus for the new writing programs in Delaware, Chester and Montgomery counties that should benefit thousands of kids and hundreds of teachers.

I thought you might be interested in a project that could have a tremendous impact on our schools' curricula.

(Memorandum from Nicholas Spennato, Language Arts Specialist for the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, to his supervisor)

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As a result of comments such as these, the Pennsylvania Writing Project offered in-service courses of 30 hours to teachers in Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties in Fall 1980 and Spring 1981. Each course was available for either In-Service Education credits or graduate credits (through West Chester State College). A book's worth of thinking and a week's worth of doing went into every phrase of the single paragraph describing the courses for potentially interested teachers.

> This course will build on successful practices in teaching writing at all grade levels and for all subject areas. Teacher consultants from the Pennsylvania Writing Project, an affiliate of the Bay Area Writing Project, will share a variety of specific classroom strategies for involving students in the composing process. These will emphasize creating a writing environment, motivating students to write; developing fluency, form and correctness; and reducing the paper load. Participants will be shown models for enabling students to see themselves as writers, to work in writing and response groups, and to use writing as a means of learning.

In these in-service presentations, ——————————→ ←— . . —. practicing teachers were to be teaching other teachers about the writing process. Following the model established by the parent project, each teacher-consultant was to make a presentation including statements of philosophy and goals, reference to supporting research or theoretical studies, specific objectives, general and specific activities plans, and evaluation plans. Presentations formulated and tested in the Summer Institute were expected to be flexible enough that they could be part of course syllabi tailored to the needs of attending teachers. Some comments by teachers participating in the Project's in-service courses follow.

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I am faced with teaching grammar, which is all my syllabus calls for, in a new and exciting way. This is why I'm constantly seeking new ways to approach grammar. This course has given me good ideas to get my students interested and involved. I found that getting them interested in the work cut down in the amount of time I spend disciplining the class. I have been able to see a big change in their writing. I have stopped red-marking everything. By using techniques in the various readings, my students are able to correct their own mistakes.

As far as the goals of my students--I think they just want to survive. They are products of a "ghetto" environment and as a result face many obstacles. Many come "high" to class but it's not as frequent as before. I try to constantly impress upon them the importance of an education and goal setting. Realistically I must admit to myself that a few will never make it beyond getting high and "getting over" but I also believe for everyone that doesn't make it there'll be five (at least) who do. If I didn't believe this, I'd give up teaching. I've had students come back and tell me they appreciated my pushing them. That makes it all worthwhile.

There was only one point that I was skeptical of. . . . I could not adjust to reading and accepting rewrites that were poorly punctuated. As I progressed in the course and in the readings I discovered a solution to that problem: to let the students gain confidence in their writing before I looked for mistakes. The most important point was to always pick something positive about the students' writing. This way I would not alienate students. After the confidence was gained and they felt secure, then I could incorporate correcting mistakes as a revision lesson. Through revision not only is the content improved but also the mechanics of the writing.

(From a position paper by Deborah Townsend, Chester High School, Chester-Upland School District)

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It is a known fact that the classroom teacher is under an extremely tight time schedule and such pressures do not always allow enough time for every subject. Unfortunately, since writing is such a time-consuming process, it has often been pushed aside or assigned purely as homework. I feel very strongly that there must be time allowed for writing at least three times per week and this writing should be done in class. This shows the student that writing is important. It also provides the student with an opportunity to ask questions and conference with the teacher on school time instead of at home where help may be unavailable. If teachers do not think writing is important enough to allow sufficient time for it in class, how can we expect students to understand and appreciate the worth of the written word?

I have come away from this course with a lot of good ideas, a lot of questions about the validity of the teaching methods I have used in the past, and some good research to back up the new methods I plan on using. I will need this "proof" when I try to implement my ideas because I work under a principal who is very interested in curriculum and the validity of materials being used in the school. I'm afraid I'll have a tough time convincing him that I'd like to de-emphasize workbook and publisher-produced activities but I'm sure I can in the long run.

(From a position paper by Nancy Sweeney,
Colwyn Elementary, William Penn
School District)

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Good writers don't just appear by accident. They must be carefully nurtured. At one time I did not insist that my most reluctant second and third grade writers actually produce much writing. I thought that when their fine motor skills improved and their knowledge of the mechanics of English increased, they would be more receptive to the idea of writing. Now I believe almost the opposite. The fear of writing must be overcome early in the school experience, before it has grown to insurmountable proportions. We learn to write by writing. . . .

The teacher, as coach, should always work to encourage confidence and freedom of expression. Her role is more showing how to do than telling what is wrong. She helps him to use various techniques of pre-writing, including discussion, listing, brainstorming, circle paragraphing and free writing. She must develop the wisdom to know how much revision a child is capable of doing, before he becomes tired or discouraged. She can help a child to feel pride in his kinship to "real writers" who do many revisions. She can help him to see the real reasons for revision--his needs to be understood and to accomplish his own purposes.

(From a position paper by Phoebe Hershey, School in Rose Valley, Moylan)

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Once I got over the compulsion that every theme must be read word-by-word, and every error marked with a "trusty red pen," and that students did not all have to write on the same topic at the same time, I discovered what I have termed "The Joy of Writing," and even better, my students have discovered this joy too!. . . .

Student response groups can sometimes do more in five minutes than a dedicated teacher can accomplish in three months. . . . Fragments and run-on sentences become real when pointed out by a classmate. It is just another English lesson when the teacher says it. . . .

(From a position paper by Judith Volk,
Paxon Hollow Junior High School,
Marple Newtown School District)

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When one looks at the quality of writing of the average high school graduate one begins to question the effectiveness of the methods of teaching writing currently employed in our schools. . . .

The writing process is a constant thinking process. Children need time, not only to express their thoughts, but to work out their thoughts. It is through the writing process that children can develop their thoughts. It is not necessary to know what you are going to write before you start. Writing is not only a mechanical vehicle to convey one's thoughts but an active process through which one develops his thoughts (Elbow). Children need to learn this and have many opportunities to develop their thoughts through writing. Children should write everyday. . . .

In place of multiple-choice or sentence completion work sheets children should be asked to write down what they have learned at the end of a lesson. This learning-centered writing is a valuable tool to the teacher in helping her to plan for the next lesson and gives her

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The writing process is a constant thinking process. Children need time, not only to express their thoughts, but to work out their thoughts. It is through the writing process that children can develop their thoughts. It is not necessary to know what you are going to write before you start. Writing is not only a mechanical vehicle to convey one's thoughts but an active process through which one develops his thoughts (Elbow). Children need to learn this and have many opportunities to develop their thoughts through writing. Children should write everyday. . . .

In place of multiple-choice or sentence completion work sheets children should be asked to write down what they have learned at the end of a lesson. This learning-centered writing is a valuable tool to the teacher in helping her to plan for the next lesson and gives her

the opportunity to clear up any misconceptions before the unit progresses any further. At the culmination of certain units students could be asked to write a book or a story. The students must incorporate their new knowledge of the subject matter. This demands a much higher level of thinking from the students than worksheets. Learning-centered writing helps the children know what they know.

(From a position paper by Eileen Lynch, Highland Park Elementary, Upper Darby School District)

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The writing process needs motivation or pre-writing of some form. These various techniques I have discovered through the Pennsylvania Writing Project go beyond the usual lessons from my antiquated language textbook. My class has responded to pictures, newspapers, imaginative and current topics. I realize motivation will be the easiest part of our writing; uninhibited third graders are able to find fun and ideas almost anywhere and openly particpate and respond to this part of the writing process. They then try to outline their thoughts either on paper or in their heads. They still must think about and pre-write the beginning, middle and end of some of their writing in order to feel comfortable. . . .

The need for revision by all writers is the most important idea to convey to my class. They would try to write a paragraph, consider it done and be upset and disappointed when it was returned with "red marks." I have now shown them pre-writing and writing with many scribbles and cross-outs; some of this is my own writing, some is theirs. I have even put stickers on revised work to show them I felt they were really doing a nice job of teaching themselves and some great learning was taking place. Our class now uses partners or groups to pre-read and

check papers for revision by the author. This has helped students have immediate reaction to grammar, punctuation, and spelling mistakes which come when these mistakes are most easily recognized and understood.

(From a position paper by Anne Coacher, Presentation BVM School, Penn Wynne)

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This course has helped me help them by providing me with a wider variety of means to reach them and draw them out of themselves and into writing and sharing. The rapport and trust between teacher/student and between student/student has increased. To my pleasure, my students' attitudes toward writing have also been positively affected to a significant degree. When I told my classes that I would be accepting the position of counselor, many asked if our writing projects and journal writing would continue. Now, nearly two months later, rarely does a day pass in which I fail to receive a draft or revision of a student's writing. They are not seeking approval only. They take pleasure in sharing something they value and enjoyed doing with someone they know who also enjoys writing. . . .

I think if my kids were in a position to do so, they'd give [the course instructors and teacher-consultants] an "A+" because of what they got from you. And that's really what matters to me. This semester will probably be my last as a teacher of English, and this course has done much to make it my best.

(From a position paper by Linda G. Porreca, Paxon Hollow Junior High School, Marple Newtown School District)

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Ideas

Excitable, New

Exploring, Discovering, Investigating

Poems, Writing, Movement, Progress

Probing, Reflecting, Thinking

Positive, Reinforcement

Trials

(Paula Stuart, Octorara School District)

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From teachers to students, from students to us

What Paul Diederich, Director of Testing at Educational Testing Service at Princeton, New Jersey, said of the parent Bay Area Writing Project also--we hope--applies to us:

> [It] has stirred up English teachers to an extent that I have seldom if ever seen. I was closely involved in the work of some of the research and development centers established by Project English, but none of them started what one would call a "movement." I believe that the Bay Area Writing Project really has started a movement that is sweeping the country. . . . With all my bias in favor of hard data, I am pretty sure that this is one of those ideas that will last.

Although we are pleased to accept this immodest exuberance on the part of a noted researcher in the field of writing, the truest evaluators of our work as writing teachers are our student writers. After the Institute, after the in-service work, what do they learn ——→ and how do they feel about what they learn? In addition to our current evaluation effort to provide systematic and quantitative answers to these questions, we wanted contextual data about what and how students learned in writing-centered classrooms, and how they felt about writing. Our students are accumulating--and we are reading--a constantly expanding commentary made by each student about his or her writing process or use

of writing as a vehicle for learning. Since these statements are the "bottom line" for the Pennsylvania Writing Project, they will serve as our last word. . . until we write again.

From the students of Freema Nichols, Nether Providence Middle School, Wallingford/Swarthmore School District:

> I thought the book we all published was a good idea. It gave you a chance to read other people's writing and what they felt about something.
>
> (Laura Pike)

> I really like free writing and I wish we could have it more than twice a sweek. We have English, Math & Social studies every day, why couldn't we have Writing Workshop every day? You probably want to know why I like "W.W." so much, right? I think the main reason is because we can write whatever we want to, we don't have to worry about spelling or punctuation at first.
>
> (Jennifer Bell)

> I really enjoy this class. I enjoy using my imagination and listening to others. At this point I would hope this program would be in every school.
>
> (Tammie Glover)

> I'm real glad that right now we are starting to write letters to other people becuase I like it much better than writing whatever comes to your mind. I really enjoy this class.
>
> Beth Petrucelli

From the students of Janet Greco, Upper Dublin High School, Upper Dublin School District:

> I've learned alot about me [by doing writing.] I never knew that I could make this stupid pen really work for me. In the past I hated writing essays. Everyone does sometimes. . . . But most of all I've learned to enjoy writing which I never thought I would.
>
> Alan Witsen

> The writing we did in class opened new doors for me. Before I didn't know that I could write because for one thing spelling holds me back from using words. So I would cut corners and not describe things the way I would like.
>
> Brian McAleer

From the students of Joan Flynn, Hillsdale Elementary School, West Chester Area School District:

> It reminds me to proofread. I understand [mathematics] word problems better when I write my own.
>
> (Bryan McDermott)

> By writing in Math class I have learned to see what I have done wrong and how to stop making the same mistake. And it reminds me to go over and check my answer. I have learned how to do word problems better by writing my own.
>
> (Cindy Mahoney)

> Helps me to get better grades.
>
> (Jennifer Poynter)

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For additional information on the Pennsylvania Writing Project, contact Robert H. Weiss, Director, The Writing Program, West Chester State College, West Chester, PA 19380. Telephone (215) 436-2281.